

*For immediate release*

### **EQIP Sign-up Continues**

Personnel from the U.S. Department of Agriculture have announced that the sign-up for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) continues for farmers, ranchers, and other land users throughout the state.

EQIP is a voluntary conservation program administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Farm Service Agency (FSA) to help landowners install conservation practices on their land. The first application period for this program will end on March 2, 2001. March 2<sup>nd</sup> is very important because producers must file by this date to be considered in the first ranking period. It is highly recommended that anyone interested in this conservation program sign up before the first application period ends. In the weeks following that date, all applications will be evaluated and ranked for possible funding.

EQIP can help agricultural producers solve natural resource concerns through incentive payments and cost sharing for the installation of conservation practices. All EQIP activities must be carried out according to a conservation plan in cooperation with soil and water conservation districts.

To participate in the program, agricultural producers must sign up at local Farm Service Agency offices. Those applications will be ranked by personnel from the Natural Resources Conservation Service. NRCS personnel will look at the total cost and environmental benefits derived from the installation of conservation practices on the farms and ranches.

Farmers, ranchers, and other landowners can receive up to \$10,000 per year not to exceed \$50,000 for the life of the contract. EQIP can pay up to 75 percent of the cost of installing some conservation practices. Landowners can choose to take less cost share or no cost share for some practices in order to rank more favorably on the funding list.

For more information on the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and how it may help you and your operation, call your nearest USDA office, or the state office of the Natural Resources Conservation Service in Alexandria, La., (318) 473-7759.

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